

really loves him and not the matador de toros. "El Macareno" of course takes objection to this and lunges toward his rival, but, in fine operatic tradition, the crowd holds them apart, urging the bandit to leave before someone gets hurt or the law shows up. Eventually he goes.

The crowd disperses and Soleá tells Padre Antón that she is torn between two loves; she has passion for Juanillo but feels an obligation to Rafael, who, she reveals, found her abandoned, took her in and provided her with sustenance and love. She asks for and receives the priest's promise that he will tell no one of her confession.

Now, just as we thought a peace of sorts had been hammered out, the Wildcat suddenly reappears and he and Rafael are set to go at it all over again. The matador produces a knife, but Soleá grabs it away from him and throws it down a well. She then warns Juanillo, who is armed, that if he shoots Rafael she will kill herself. Thwarted, the bandit turns to leave yet again, but first he gets in a last word: when Rafael faces the bull in Sevilla next Sunday, he says, the matador might as well let the animal kill him, because if he doesn't, he, the Wildcat, will.

In the first scene of Act Two it is now Sunday afternoon and, at his own home in Sevilla, Rafael is dressing for the corrida. Once again, Miuras are on the cartel and this time he will face six of them as única espada. He calls Soleá in, for what we gather is an effort more or less to reassure himself of her love, after all this Wildcat business. Hedging somewhat, she declares that she is most grateful to Rafael. Now Rafael's mother arrives with Padre Antón, who is disguised as a layman so he can enjoy the corrida properly. By now everybody is in on the gypsy prediction bit, and all are worried. Except, apparently, Rafael.

Scene Two of the second act is the one all taurinos like best, for it takes place at La Maestranza and is the highlight of the opera, though not the finale. Rafael and "Hormigón" are in the patio de caballos prior to the corrida (the salida into the ring is there

tells his jefe, who has not seen the bulls, that they are "like cathedrals." "El Macareno" boasts that he will kill all six Miuras, after which he will kill the outlaw Juanillo. Then, subsequent to praying in the chapel, he heads up the paseillo and marches into the ring with "Hormigón" and the others of his cuadrilla to the strains of the pasodoble *El Gato Montés*.

Soleá and Frasquita were not supposed to come to the corrida, but they of course come anyway. For reasons known only to Penella (or perhaps the opera's artistic director), they come in through the patio de caballos, and here "Hormigón" spots them as he exits the ring after piccing the first bull. Afraid seeing them will rattle Rafael, the picador locks the two women in the chapel.

Meanwhile, back in the ring, the great pasodoble is playing and the crowd is roaring. It is at this point in the most recent tour of the opera that the sheer gauze curtain is dropped at front of the stage and the old taurine movie is projected onto it as the "banda taurina" (the orchestra) continues to blast out *El Gato Montés* and the unseen people go on cheering -- until the fatal cornada takes place, to the accompaniment of doomsday musical chords and screams from the crowd. Rafael Ruíz "El Macareno" has, of course, met death in the ring, exactly as the gypsy prophesied. The Miura has killed him just as quickly and as surely as Burlero would kill "Yiyo" some seven decades later.

Rafael's body is taken to the enfermería but it is of course too late, and the medical facility merely serves as a resting place for the torero's inert form. Soleá and Frasquita, released from the chapel now by "Hormigón," rush to the infirmary. When Soleá sees Rafael lying there, dead, she faints in the picador's arms.

Act Three is a bit anticlimactic. Soleá has died of grief and her body lies within Frasquita's house. A throng of locals, including the gypsy woman, have come to pay their respects. Juanillo the Wildcat now appears on the scene there at Frasquita's place, as

death. In anguish, he goes into the house and reemerges with the girl's body in his arms, carrying it off to his mountain lair.

The last scene takes place in the bandits' cave. Juanillo has laid out Soleá's prostrate form there but "Hormigón" and the townspeople have followed him in order to retrieve the body. When the picador and the others enter the cave, Juanillo pulls out a knife but then, realizing what the situation is and with his love now lost to him, he asks one of them to kill him. No one moves.

Now la guardia can be heard approaching, coming to arrest Juanillo. The bandit chief turns to his righthand man, Pezuño, and begs him to shoot him through the heart. Pezuño hesitates but finally does so, and El Gato Montés falls to the ground, embracing Soleá's body as he dies. (Curtain.)

One can only presume that Pezuño is now to be arrested for the murder of his boss, which was really a pretty stupid move on the henchman's part. But nobody ever said opera plots were literary masterworks.

One also might ask what happened to those other five Miuras. And, for that matter, the one which killed "El Macareno." A rather daunting challenge for a (most assuredly) horrified sobresaliente. ¡Ay! ¡Qué lástima! We shall never know. □

